

Yet while they acknowledge the divine supremacy of Niarnbe, the Barotse address their prayers most frequently to the inferior deities, the *ditino*, who are the deified kings of the country. The tombs of the departed monarchs may be seen near the villages which they inhabited in life. Each tomb stands in a grove of beautiful trees and is encircled by a tall palisade of pointed stakes, covered with fine mats, like the palisade which surrounds the royal residence of a living king. Such an enclosure is sacred ; the people are forbidden to enter it lest they should disturb the ghost of him who sleeps below. But the inhabitants of the nearest village are charged with the duty of keeping the tomb and the enclosure in good order, repairing the palisade, and replacing the mats when they are worn out. Once a month, at the new moon, the women sweep not only the grave and the enclosure but the whole village. The guardian of the tomb is at the same time a priest; he acts as intermediary between the god and the people who come to pray to the deity. He bears the title of Ngomboti; he alone has the right to enter the sacred enclosure ; the profane multitude must stand at a respectful distance. Even the king himself, when he comes to consult one of his ancestors, is forbidden to set foot on the holy ground. In presence of the god, or, as they call him, the Master of the Tomb, the monarch must bear himself like a slave in the presence of his lord. He lies down near the entrance, clasps his hands, and gives the royal salute ; and from within the enclosure the priest solemnly returns the salute, just as the king

himself, when he holds his court, returns the salute of his subjects. Then the suppliant, whether king or commoner, makes his petition to the deity and deposits his offering; for no man may pray to the god with empty hands. Inside the enclosure, close to the entrance, is a hole which is supposed to serve as a channel of communication with the spirit of the deified king. In it the offerings are placed. Often they consist of milk which is poured into the hole ; and the faster it drains away, the more favourably inclined is the got! thought: to be to the petitioner. More solid offerings, such as flesh, clothes, and glass beads, become the property of the priest after they have been allowed to lie for a decent time beside the sacred